



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

Ceannasaí Náisiúnta Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte  
Ospidéal Naomh Lómáin Baile Phámar Baile Átha Cliath 20.

T 01 6207304 R: jim.ryan1@hse.ie

Head of Operations, Mental Health Service  
St Loman's Hospital, Palmerstown Dublin 20  
Tel: 01-6207304 Email: [jim.ryan1@hse.ie](mailto:jim.ryan1@hse.ie)

10<sup>th</sup> March 2021  
Deputy Róisín Shortall  
Dail Eireann,  
Dublin 2.

PQ  
Number: 9554/21

PQ  
Question: **To ask the Minister for Health if he is taking steps to review access to services for persons with eating disorders given the diversion of funding from that area; if not, if the establishment of a working group for same has been considered; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy Shortall,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

Most people can and do get better from eating disorders. While a small number of people benefit from more intensive treatment through day programmes or inpatient care, the most effective treatment setting is in the community. Dedicated community based eating disorder services, where multidisciplinary teams have specialist training can provide evidence based care and treatment.

The HSE developed and approved a Model of Care for Eating disorders that provides a blueprint for the development of specialist regional teams with skilled clinicians that can provide evidence based interventions collaborating with acute hospital physicians and GPs as required. Early intervention and evidence based treatment by multi-disciplinary specialist community eating disorder teams are recommended by the HSE Model of Care for Eating Disorders with a focus on both psychological and physical recovery. The Model of Care was launched in 2018 and continued implementation is vital to deliver access to high quality eating disorders in Ireland.

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/cspd/ncps/mental-health/eating-disorders/moc/hse-eating-disorder-services-model-of-care.pdf>

The clinical program aims to establish an Eating Disorder network (8 adult teams and 8 CAMHS teams) in accordance with agreed Model of Care 2018 and approved implementation plan over the coming years. To date 3 teams has commenced recruitment and are delivering a service (CHO4 CAMHS, CHO 7 CAMHS and CHO6 adults).

The Department of Health and the HSE agreed the mental health budget for 2020 following the usual annual estimates planning process. The HSE have operational responsibility to allocate funding and make decisions



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based on service needs that often change due because of the competing oscillating health priorities throughout the year.

In 2020 there were a number of challenging clinical priorities that required consideration within an overarching context of HSE cost containment and service delivery. The HSE made a decision to temporarily pause the further development of eating disorder posts. This was not a clinical decision, rather an operational one. Funding was diverted to meet existing demands to provide additional clinical supports such as agency staffing and to facilitate specialist placements for those with complex mental health needs including eating disorders. Clinical priorities for patients with eating disorders were maintained as resources would allow.

Since March 2020 Covid-19 has been a significant cause of disruption, but most primary care and specialist mental health services have continued to operate and provide clinical interventions to service users including those presenting with complex eating disorders. In addition, funding was used to increase many online evidence based supports which were delivered nationally such as a free 24/7 crisis texting service, free online counselling and additional online supports provided by NGO's such as BodyWhys.

In 2021, the HSE will invest €3.94 million in specialist Eating Disorder services and intend to progress the recruitment of eating disorder specialist posts. The HSE are committed to support the newly published model of Care and will continue to work with the DoH to deliver on the recommendations contained in Sharing the Vision where expanded services for those with eating disorders are advocated.

I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

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Thomas O'Brien  
General Manager Mental Health Services